

BB/C  
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# THE BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION

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Dear



Please forgive me for not having answered your letter of 28th January long before this, but in one way or another I did not seem to have managed to get around to drafting something on the Monitoring Service which I felt would meet your requirements. However, at long last I have prepared the attached short description of the Service which I hope you will at any rate fill in from your own pretty detailed knowledge of it. I hope very much that this is what you want, but if there is anything further I can do to help, please let me know by signal and I will let you have it by return.

I was very amused by the parodies on the two English poets - I am sure you would not have dared to send me one on Robert Burns - and I am very much looking forward to seeing you all at the end of next month.

*[Signature]*  
*[Signature]*

J. T. Campbell  
Head of Monitoring Service

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Washington 25, D.C.

JTC/JB

THE BBC MONITORING SERVICE

The BBC began monitoring as an organised operation in 1939 shortly before the outbreak of war. It had been planned by the BBC in cooperation with the Ministry of Information in anticipation of the closing of some of the normal sources of news, and was then thought of primarily as a service to the BBC's own News output departments. The problem of the processing and distributing of the large volume of material which was to be obtained had still to be fully considered. The scope and possibilities of the Monitoring Service as a rapid and unique source of information was quickly grasped by Service and Government departments, and the Unit was rapidly expanded, not merely to increase the coverage of foreign stations, but also to process the material and issue it to the BBC and Government departments in the most useful and convenient form through the medium of daily reports and teleprinter services.

Post War Reorganisation

After the war the Monitoring Service was reviewed in consultation with Government departments, and was reorganised and consolidated on a peace time basis.

The Service is now situated at Caversham Park near Reading, and consists of three main departments - the Reception Unit, which is responsible for the basic operation of monitoring - the News Bureau and the Reports Department, both of which select and edit material from the Monitors' product for the different recipients of the Service. The necessary technical facilities are provided by a section of the BBC Engineering Division, and consist of a primary aerial system within the grounds of Caversham Park itself, which is capable of receiving a high proportion of the signals required, and a more elaborate aerial system some three miles away where those signals not receivable at Caversham are tuned and fed by line to the Listening Room there.

Reception Unit

Reception Unit works round the clock on a shift system seven days a week, and covers broadcasts from some 37 countries in more than 30 languages according to schedules which are kept under constant review to meet the requirements of Government departments and official users of the material. During a shift, ~~one~~ monitor is allocated certain transmissions for which he is responsible. He listens to these, which are simultaneously recorded on a Dictaphone recorder, so that he may be aware of the contents of the bulletin and can pick up any news flashes which have to be dealt with immediately, or as a first priority for transcription at the end of the transmission. The monitor takes the recording to a cubicle and selects and transcribes what is required by Output departments. It is the responsibility of the Monitor to make a preliminary selection from the broadcasts. He is guided in this by general briefs and particular directives as occasion arises, but inevitably his own experience and qualities are important factors. The approximate number of words selected and transcribed by Reception Unit amounts to some 150,000 words per day.

The monitor's transcript, which is done on a master stencil, is then rolled off into as many copies as are necessary and sent to the various receiving departments in the building.

- 2 -

News Bureau

News Bureau, with a small staff, also works on a 24 hours basis, and is responsible for passing material by tele-printer to the News departments of the BBC, and the Foreign Office. For this purpose, a selection of some 20,000 words per day is taken from the Monitors' output, primarily on the basis of its news value or its importance as urgent political information.

Reports Department

The Reports Department is responsible for producing the documents which are published by the Monitoring Service and which appear daily or at less frequent intervals. They give the main trends and new points of interest of each day's broadcasting in concise form, and at greater length the text of important broadcasts and various types of detailed information of interest to Government departments and those concerned with specialized aspects of foreign political and economic developments. While primarily for use of Government departments, these reports are made available on a subscription basis to non official users.

At the present time the documents which are published consist of a daily monitoring report, which sums up in two or three pages the outstanding items and main lines of emphasis of the previous day's world broadcasting, and a daily report on Middle East broadcasting. The rest of the world is divided into three groups - the USSR, Eastern Europe, and the Far East, and a document is published bi-weekly covering the broadcasts from each of these areas. Supplements to these reports are published as necessary on a daily or weekly basis as required. For example, a weekly economic supplement is published regularly for the Far East, and during a meeting of the Supreme Soviet a daily supplement covering the proceedings would normally be published by the USSR section.

It is likely that within the next few months there will be a radical alteration in these documents. It is intended to publish a daily report for each area, with weekly supplements containing economic and the less urgent material.

Service to Government Departments

Within the Government, the BBC Monitoring Service is used primarily by the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Defence, and maintains very close day to day liaison with both. As has been said before, there are two teleprinter terminals in the Foreign Office, which is thus served both by teleprinter and by the documents. The documents also go to the Ministry of Defence, who have a prime interest in the restricted Regional Report which contains the material selected from the monitoring of the Russian Regional Stations. The material supplied to Government departments is, of course, selected from both BBC and FBIS monitoring.

Note: Details of the cooperation between the BBC Monitoring Service and FBIS have not been mentioned in this survey as FBIS can incorporate these as necessary.